

# THE HANGING OF HANCOCK

## The Trap Falls at Twenty Minutes to Eleven Yesterday Morning

At twenty minutes of eleven yesterday at the State Prison John Hancock settled his accounts with society. It was the first execution under the new law and from the moment when the condemned man was led into the building where he was confronted by the scaffold to the instant the trap was sprung there was no hitch in the pre-arranged program and the mandates of the law were carried out to the letter.

### He Embraces Religion

For some weeks past the convicted murderer had little hope of a stay of execution and when the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence of the lower tribunal he became resigned to the inevitable and asked that he might have a conference with Rev. Darnelle, one of the prison Chaplains and Rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

Expressing a desire to embrace religion he was baptized the evening before the execution and at eight o'clock in the morning of the fatal day received the Sacrament in his cell. He made no confession but declared his innocence through all.

### Four Guards Refuse to Act

The day before the execution Warden Considine called upon the various guards about the prison and assigned them their positions to do detail work in connection with the execution.

Four of them refused to act in any capacity. They were Nat Dowe, Joe Ripplingham, Jerry Barrett and Charles Stone.

They were immediately discharged by the warden.

### The Appointed Hour

The execution was set for 10:30, and a few minutes before, the people who had been invited by the Warden and Attorney General to witness it, entered the stone building where the scaffold was erected and took seats to the left. A few minutes later the warden entered followed by the condemned man and the guards. The chaplain in his Episcopal robes walked at Hancock's side. His arms were strapped to his sides but his feet were free. The floor was bare but a roll of matting extended from the door to the foot of the gallows steps.

When the prisoner had gone half the distance, he turned smilingly to the little gathering and, pausing, sent his eyes searchingly down the different lines of benches as if trying to find some familiar face.

The guards attempted to press him along, but he turned and remarked in a querulous tone: "Let me take a good look at this audience."

"Come on" said one of the guards. "I want to be permitted to look over this audience" he responded. "I won't be long. Say, Warden, let me stop just a moment, I want to see these people."

No one seemed disposed to deny his earnest request and for probably a minute he stood looking each man squarely in the face in turn.

During that minute there was something heavy in the silence which hung in the room. He was unable to recognize any one in the gathering, although his eyes dwelt longer on some faces as if he was brushing away some of the cob webs in his memory to clear the way to a recognition.

"Now, I'm ready" he finally remarked, turning with a laugh to the Warden. He moved on and mounted the steps with a careless tread. Standing upon the scaffold, he placed his feet together and smiled as the guards knelt and strapped his ankles.

### Strange Nerve

The writer has seen eight other public executions but never before saw a man go to his last account with such absolute indifference of death as this one. He turned his head to this guard and that and chatted and smiled as if there was nothing really to be serious over.

The affair impressed him less than any one in the building. He seemed to feel that he was the center of attraction and was happy over it.

There never seemed to run instant a tremor of fear or irresolution in his demeanor. He seemed to rather enjoy the whole situation.

It is the custom to read the death warrant to the condemned man. This indicated to the man on the trap that

the person managing the execution has a legal right to do so. Hancock said he would waive his right to listen to it and so this part of the ceremony was omitted.

As he stood on the trap facing the audience, still smiling, the Chaplain uttered the last prayer.

"Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we beseech Thee to look down on this, Thy servant with the eyes of Thy divine mercy. The decree of the law condemns him to pass unwillingly to the great beyond and we pray Thee that when he enters the dark valley of the shadow of death that Thy rod and staff shall comfort him, and that Thy eternal charity will ever be his nakedness. We ask this in the name of Christ, the Savior, Amen."

### His Last Words

Hancock in a perfectly audible voice spoke as follows:

"Standing here today, whether in the morning or afternoon, I know not which it is, I wish to say that I freely forgive all persons who have had a hand in my prosecution. Forgive them all, oh Lord of all mercies for they know not what they do." There was a pause and he smiled again and continued, "I am innocent of this crime. I go to my death an innocent man."

One of the guards stepped behind him and lifted the noose over his head and began adjusting the knot just below the left ear. He smiled and turned his head to be able to assist in the adjustment. The touch of the rope which was like the outstretched finger of death upon his person did not cause a flinching from the inevitable.

As the black cap was lifted above his head he remarked in an ordinary tone in which there was not a tremor or huskiness of accent: "I am an innocent man."

He reached his right hand out from his side as well as he was able, to indicate that he wanted to shake hands. The guards and the Warden, and last of all the Chaplain took his hand in turn and he seemed pleased. The black cap went down, obscuring the smile upon his features and he stood as steady as a clock while the strings were tied.

Behind him, enclosed in a little box, shut off from the audience, were three men each holding a knife ready to cut a cord when the signal came. These cords ran down a square wooden way to a weight which connected the lever which held the trap in place. One cord of the three was attached to the weight and the two others were blanks. The man who had passed the cords up could not tell which one held the weight in place.

### The Trap Falls

Everything was now in readiness and the seconds which ticked away seemed longer than minutes to the spectators.

The Chaplain then offered up the final prayer:

"May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your heart and mind in the knowledge and love of God, the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost and may God have mercy on your soul."

Immediately from the depths of the death mask, came the response, "He will, He will."

The warden raised his hand at twenty minutes to eleven and as he went up above the level of the enclosure which shut the executioners from view each man severed his cord and the weight which was released, started down the hollow wooden way. It could not have been more than two seconds on its journey, but some of the spectators said afterwards that it seemed an hour. It seemed for an instant as if the lever had refused to act. In the midst of the suspense the trap opened its jaw with a downward jerk and the form of Hancock shot through the opening full six feet. There was no struggle or gyration and the body hung there motionless on a level with the spectators.

Drs. Berry, Circle and Sullivan stepped inside the enclosure and took the pulse of the motionless figure before them. One who took the right pulse reported no indication of circulation but the left wrist gave faint signs of pulsation. Hancock, before going on the scaffold suggested that

if he was conscious after the drop he would move his right hand back and forth. He made no such movement.

The minutes slipped away and the spectators never moved from their seats. At seventeen minutes after the trap had been sprung the Warden stepping to the front said:

"Gentlemen, the man is dead."

They rose from their seats and filed out. The three men in the little enclosure were still invisible.

Twelve men were then selected, according to law to sign the death certificate. After the doors were closed the body was cut down.

An examination showed that the neck had been broken and the spinal cord severed. Death must have been instantaneous and the faint pulse beats on the left side had been the result of muscular contraction.

During the execution the other prisoners were housed in the dining room under guard.

The four other condemned men over whom the death watch has been placed were greatly impressed with the fate of Hancock and sat motionless in their cells, while they knew he was paying the death penalty.

### The Last Tribute

After the body was placed in the coffin an elaborate field of Japanese astors, of the white and purple variety were brought in and laid upon the coffin, the last tribute from his fellow prisoners.

Hancock suffered the extreme penalty for the brutal murder of two men in Parump valley, Lincoln county, named Engelke and Edmiston. He killed them as they slept and cutting off their heads, burned the bodies. A woman who was his mistress gave the testimony that sent him to the gallows; nearly eight years later.

### Britt and Nelson.

The long winded fight between Britt and Nelson today at Colma ought to result in a victory for Nelson if he has fair treatment in the ring. He is essentially a fighter and a puncher and is always found where the battle is the hottest. Britt works as much with his feet as his hands. He "mills on the retreat" and has no stomach for fighting or hard punishment. If he gets his medicine too hard he will probably slap his hand to his groin and claim a foul. The betting shows that it is cut out for the Native Son to win but Nelson may be able to "break the slate."

Livingston will take the returns by special wire. The fight is the greatest in many years.

### AFTER THE RECORD.

Hal Lemmon Starts for Sacramento to Beat the Mail Train.

Last evening Hal Lemmon, Wm. Foegel and Harry Edwards left this city at 5:15, the schedule time of the mail train for the west, in his Rambler Auto. The object of the trip is to make Sacramento as soon or before the arrival of the train in Sacramento.

Last week an attempt was made to do this bit of fast driving and but for the breaking of a wheel rim the deed would have been accomplished. On this occasion the machine has been equipped with heavier tires and it is believed that more power has been added to the machine.

The drive will be from this city to the Capitol of California, via the Macerville route. This takes the party over two summits and over the worst piece of road in the mountains. It is a severe test on the machine and the men, as it is a night run over heavy grades and down a canyon that few people care to take even in the daylight.

Without any accident the auto will defeat the mail train, as it has been done once and only for an accident would have been landed last week.

### Teachers' Institutes.

There will be an Association, State and County Institute held in Reno, commencing at 1 o'clock p. m. of October 2d, 1905, and which will continue about four days.

There will be an institute held at Elko, commencing at 1 o'clock, October 9, 1905, and continue at least three days.

A cordial invitation is extended to all teachers in the State to attend these Institutes—also to friends of education.

Noted lecturers will be in attendance.

Respectfully,

ORVIS RING,  
Superintendent of Public Instruction.

### A Musician Prodigy.

On Monday evening, next, Edward Campbell, a son of J. M. Campbell, who formerly edited the Enterprise, will give a musical recital in this city, probably at Armory Hall.

In speaking of his appearance the Tonopah Sun says:

The performer was received with unusual interest by a large audience of music lovers. His execution is perfect and he demonstrated that he was master of the instrument. His selections embraced some very difficult pieces but he played them with ease and perfection. The recital was a treat to all.

Dean Eddy, formerly rector of St. Peter's Church and now Dean of the Salt Lake Cathedral, is visiting Carson for a few days. He is warmly welcomed by his old friends in this city.

Ralph Harcourt came over from Reno yesterday and will continue on to Gardnerville this morning, where he will manage the telephone office there.

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